

REMARKS

Applicants submit that by the present Amendment and Remarks, this application is placed in clear condition for immediate allowance. Specifically, in the Office Action dated October 30, 2002, the Examiner indicated that claims 3, 6, 7 and 9 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowed if placed in independent form. By the present Amendment, claims 3, 6, 7 and 9 have been placed in independent form and the identified informality has been cured. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 12 have been cancelled. Applicants, therefore, submit that the present Amendment does not generate any new matter issue or any new issue for that matter and places the application in clear condition for immediate allowance. Accordingly, entry of the present Amendment and Remarks, and favorable consideration, are respectfully solicited pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.116.

Claims 2 through 4 were rejected under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112.

In the statement of the rejection, the Examiner raised antecedent basis issues. This rejection is traversed.

Initially, claims 1, 2 and 4 have been cancelled and claim 3 has been placed in independent form. Applicants submit that the antecedent issue raised by the Examiner with respect to claim 2, now incorporated into claim 3, has been addressed and cured. In this respect, Applicants express appreciation for Examiner Hoffmann's courtesy in conducting a telephonic interview on March 19, 2003, wherein the present Amendment was discussed and considered acceptable by Examiner Hoffman.

Based upon the foregoing, Applicants solicit withdrawal of the rejection of claim 3 under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 for obviousness predicated upon Kobayashi.

Claims 11 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 for obviousness predicated upon Saito.

Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 for obviousness predicated upon Drouart considered alone or in view of Kaiser.

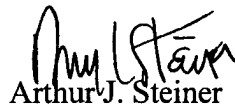
Each of the above rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103 has been rendered moot by canceling claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 12.

In summary, the antecedent basis issue has been remedied and claims 3, 6, 7 and 9, indicated allowable, have been placed in independent form. Accordingly, this application is in clear condition for immediate allowance. Favorable consideration is, therefore, respectfully solicited.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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